



The London Mayors'
Association



JOURNAL

2020





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Editorial Board

Cllr Belinda Donovan
Cllr Jean Lammiman
Steve Summers

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Do we have your membership details?

We recently asked you to complete a membership information update form.

Many of you have kindly returned them to me and I have been able to change addresses, email addresses, telephone numbers and in many cases add mobile numbers we never had.

Thank you to all those who responded.

With over 850 members it is difficult to keep track of you all, and we

know you like to keep up with information, even if you are no longer able to participate in some of our visits to wonderful places.

Sadly, we also found that a number of members had died, and we were still sending information.

With this in mind can I please ask you to email any changes to me at:
Bob Belam:
membership@londonmayors.org.uk

Chairman's opening address

Clare Whelan OBE DL FRSA,
Chairman, London Mayors' Association



I write this in my final days as the Chairman of the London Mayors' Association and would like to start with thanks to all the Members of the Association who have made the experience of being your chair for the past four years such an honour and a pleasure.

This edition of the London Mayors' Association Journal is a record of some of the highlights of the past municipal year 2019-2020; a year which started in many ways as London Mayors' Association years do with some of our traditional events and some very special additional activities but has ended with sadly curtailed activities due to COVID-19.

The Journal has been put together by Cllr Belinda Donovan, Cllr Jean Lammiman and Steve Summers who have captured the essence of the year as we have moved from regular activities to new ways of working, such as the online introductory session for this year's new Mayors instead of our normal gathering at Westminster City Hall. This is also the first time we have distributed the Journal largely by email. Thanks Richard Nixon for

his design skills and to all those who have written articles, supplied photographs and of course Destination Events for sponsoring this publication once again.

Looking through this edition reminds me how much is done by our Officers, Executive, Vice Presidents, Patrons and committee members. As ever I feel it is remarkable that so much is achieved by volunteers alone and we should be immensely proud of that.

I end by wishing your new Chairman, Steve Summers, well in the role. I hope he enjoys it as much as I have done and look forward to reading next year's Journal under his leadership.

It has been an honour to serve you.



Clare shares a joke with the dean after the the Civic Service in Westminster Abbey

London Mayors 2019-20

WELCOME to these pages showing the Mayors, Chairmen and Speakers who served their boroughs during the Municipal Year 2019-2020.



Cllr. Ruth Bush
The Right Worshipful Lord Mayor of the City of Westminster



Alderman William Russell
The Right Honourable Lord Mayor of the City of London



Cllr. Margaret Thompson
The Worshipful Mayor of the Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames



Cllr. Will Pascall
The Worshipful Mayor of the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea



Cllr. Mick Hayes
The Worshipful Mayor of the Royal Borough of Greenwich



Cllr. Peter Chand
The Worshipful Mayor of Barking & Dagenham



Cllr. Caroline Stock
The Worshipful Mayor of Barnet



Cllr. Geraldine Lucia-Hennis
The Worshipful Mayor of Bexley



Cllr. Ernest Ezeajughi
The Worshipful Mayor of Brent



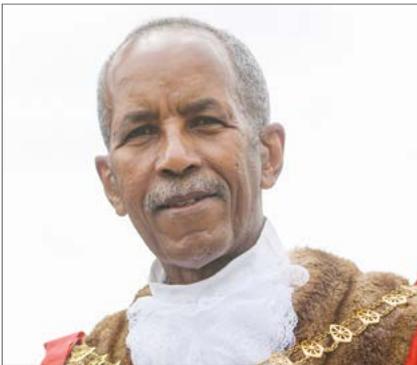
Cllr. Nicholas Bennett
The Worshipful Mayor of Bromley



Cllr. Maryan Eslamdoust
The Worshipful Mayor of Camden



Cllr. Humayun Kabir
The Worshipful Mayor of Croydon



Cllr. Abdullah Gulaid
The Worshipful Mayor of Ealing



Cllr. Kate Anolue
The Worshipful Mayor of Enfield



Cllr. Kam Adams
Speaker of Hackney



Cllr. Daryl Brown
The Worshipful Mayor of Hammersmith & Fulham



Cllr. Sheila Peacock
The Worshipful Mayor of Haringey



Cllr. Nitin Parekh
The Worshipful Mayor of Harrow



Cllr. Michael Deon Burton
The Worshipful Mayor of Havering



Cllr. David Yarrow
The Worshipful Mayor of Hillingdon



Cllr. Tony Louki
The Worshipful Mayor of Hounslow



Cllr. Rakhia Ismail
The Worshipful Mayor of Islington



Cllr. Ibrahim Dogus
The Worshipful Mayor of Lambeth



Cllr. Jacq Paschoud
The Chair of the Council of Lewisham



Cllr. Janice Howard
The Worshipful Mayor of Merton



Cllr. Joy Laguda
Chair & Civic Lead of the Council of Newham



Cllr. Zulfiqar Hussain
The Worshipful Mayor of Redbridge



Cllr. Nancy Baldwin
The Worshipful Mayor of Richmond Upon Thames



Cllr. Sandra Rhule
The Worshipful Mayor of Southwark



Cllr. Muhammad Sadiq
The Worshipful Mayor of Sutton



Cllr. Victoria Obaze
Speaker of Tower Hamlets



Cllr. Christopher Robbins CBE
The Worshipful Mayor of Waltham Forest



Cllr. Jane Cooper
The Worshipful Mayor of Wandsworth

A New Argentina!

Brian Coleman



The weather was fine, the food was excellent, the company was great and the production of EVITA was magnificent!

Yes, 60 members of the LMA made what has now become a traditional annual pilgrimage to the Regents Park Open Air Theatre (Chairman of the Board Robert Davis MBE) this year to see a preview of a brand new production of EVITA. Forget (the wonderful) Elaine Paige this was more a Rock Opera less a West End musical. Pyrotechnics, politics and excellent singing combined with a first class orchestra brought the audience which included the composer Lord Lloyd Webber to its feet!

When the smoke cleared it was obvious the open air added a dimension that could not be reproduced in any other London venue.

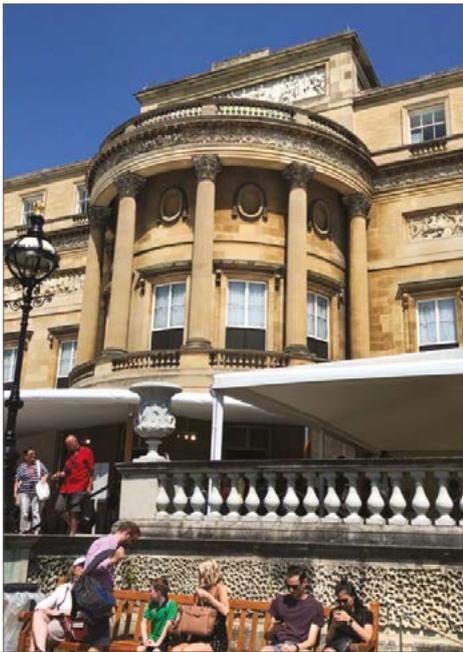
This production follows on from the Open Air Theatre's stunning Jesus Christ Superstar which LMA members saw in 2016 and continues the long and distinguished record of excellent musical productions from this Theatre. Remember the Open Air Theatre is just one of London's great theatres that exist outside of the West End and all of which put on first class professional productions and don't charge an arm and a leg for a ticket!

I am sure members will want to continue supporting the Open Air Theatre in future years .



A visit to The State Rooms at Buckingham Palace and a private tour of the Gardens

Cllr Oonagh Moulton



Hon Secretary Graham Holland and LMA Deputy Chairman Cllr Oonagh Moulton join the Royal Party on the famous balcony of Buckingham Palace

Three tours took place on Tuesday 23rd July 2019 to Buckingham Palace, the Queen's Official Residence. The first two tours took place in the late morning and a third (following overwhelming demand) was added in the afternoon that day.

We were greeted by a Member of the Royal Household events team who ensured we all successfully navigated the security and introduced us to the magnificent State Rooms.

Using audio headsets we were able to wander at our own pace through the rooms and view the beautiful furniture and stunning art collection on display throughout the Palace.

We were also treated to a special exhibition 'Queen Victoria's Palace' to commemorate the birth of Queen Victoria 200 years ago.

The weather was kind and we enjoyed tea on the Pavilion Terrace with panoramic views over the Great Lawn and Gardens. The iced coffee & cucumber sandwiches were a fine memory of the wonderful garden parties that many of us had enjoyed at the end of our Mayoral years.

After enjoying some sustenance Members in the first two groups were treated to a wonderful private tour of the gardens, described as 'a walled oasis in the middle of London' and at 39 acres is the largest private garden in the capital. Our guides took us round the lake and the herbaceous borders, the famous Waterloo Vase, Summerhouse and the tennis court where George VI played against Fred Perry and many famous players have played there too including Bjorn Borg & John McEnroe & Steffi Graf.

For many members the great day was finished off by enjoying a discount in the Royal Collection shop!



London Mayors' Annual Rifle Competition 2019

Hon Alderman Dennis Doe



CLr John Hensley and the Hillingdon team

The London Mayors' Annual Rifle Competition started in 1911 and has been held virtually every year since, excluding the years of the two World Wars.

The competition is open to both Lord Mayors and all Mayors in the Greater London Area. It is run by the LMA, with technical support from the National Small-bore Rifle Competition. The competition is very competitive and highly disciplined, overseen by the national officers of the NSRA.

Each Mayor is represented by a local Rifle Club and the standard is high, the best members being at County level. Last year's winners were the Ruislip Club who shoot on behalf of Hillingdon. They have won 9 out of the last 11 competitions! The competition is popular and the clubs take pride in representing their Mayor. Unfortunately there are now fewer clubs, thanks (i) to the type of shooting being less preferred, currently, (known as 'prone shooting'), (ii) clubs losing their ranges because Councils want the land!, (iii) some Mayors being reluctant to join in the annual competition.

I have been running this competition on behalf of the LMA

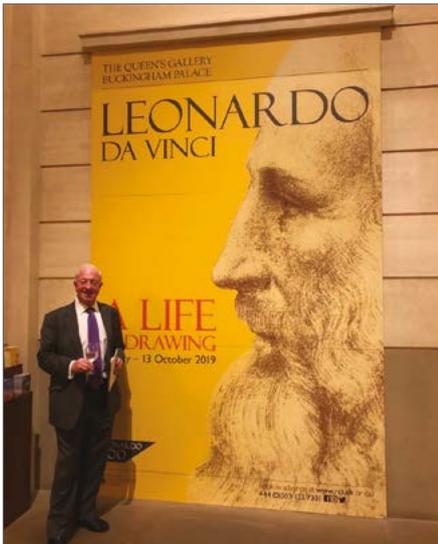
since 2004. I know of 12 Boroughs who currently have a suitable club. Very likely there maybe one or two more.

This year, 11 of those clubs are taking part, the 12th needing a recruitment drive. They are the Corporation of London, the Royal Boroughs of Kingston and Kensington & Chelsea, the London Boroughs of Barnet, Harrow, Havering, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Richmond, Sutton and Wandsworth. The competition is in two parts – (i) three preliminary rounds overseen by the NSRA, and then (ii) the top five teams entering the Final which, since 1920, has been shot at The Range in Ham, near Richmond. In the Final each team competes against each other team in turn, shooting at, 100 yards away, 24x2" diameter clay discs, which shatter on impact. The team that removes their discs the faster wins their round. The five Mayors will be invited to join the club teams and their supporters.



Leonardo de Vinci Exhibition

Cllr Belinda Donovan



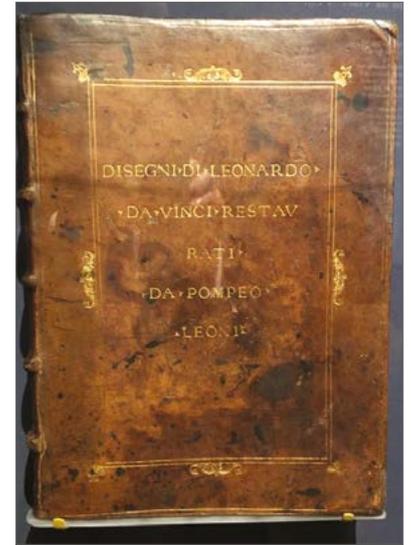
40 LMA members were treated to a private viewing after a fascinating talk about the history of the portfolio of drawings gifted to the Royal family by the Howard family who originally bought the drawings from Leonardo de Vinci's close friend and pupil.

We subsequently had our own private viewing of rooms hung with Leonardo's extensive sketches.

We were told that Leonardo had no formal education but his natural curiosity for life produced his genius – he is also widely known as one of the World's most renowned polymaths.

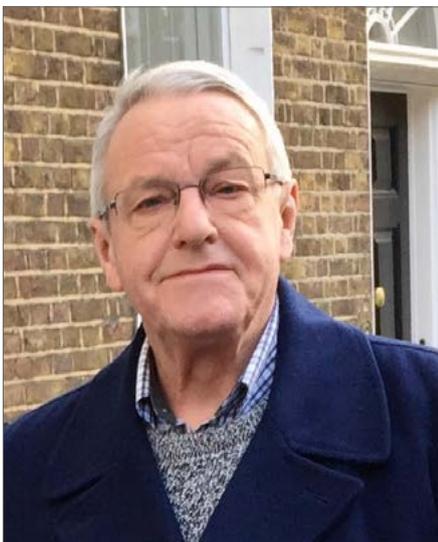
We ended the evening with a reception with delicious white wine and a chance to purchase items in their exclusive shop with a 20% discount.

Thank you to Oonagh Moulton for securing such a wonderful evening for us and Graham Holland for taking the bookings.



Borough Forum

Sean Brennan



The wonderfully refurbished Westminster City Hall hosted the second meeting of the Borough Forum in mid January. There are now thirty boroughs participating London wide.

The impressive attendance of representatives and co-ordinators was welcomed by the forum's chairman Ronnie Barden. The role of the forum was to enhance and support the mayoralty across London. It is a special group with a special mission. Its work is to ensure that the Mayoralty not only survives but continues to be sustainable in future years without it being diminished, devalued or sidelined.

Each borough representative is an important link between the LMA and their Mayor. This will strengthen the relationship and interaction between the Executive and each borough.

There followed a wide ranging and lively discussion on a variety

of issues from the welcome of elected mayors, how to encourage new and young Councillors to take an interest in the Mayoralty, the role of Deputy Lieutenants and the risks to the Mayoralty at present and in future years. Many personal experiences of the effects of budget decisions were shared.

It was proposed and unanimously supported to carry out a survey of how each borough supports their Mayor. A small working party volunteered to collate and review the results which will be discussed at the next forum meeting.

LMA visit to Spencer House

Cllr Linda Kelly



On 9 September 2019 60 LMA members had a wonderful visit to Spencer House, which was conducted by two very knowledgeable welcoming guides.

They gave us a complete history of the House, which was built in 1758. James 'Athenian' Stuart, who had studied the Arcadian values of Ancient Greek architecture, replaced Vardy as the architect of the project; as a direct result of this Spencer House was to have authentic Greek details in the internal decoration, and thus it became one of the first examples in London of the neoclassical style, which was to sweep the country. As the home of successive Earls and Countesses Spencer, the state rooms of the house became a theatre for the pageant that was London high society.

The Spencer family lived at the mansion continuously until 1895, when the house was let. They returned for a brief while in the first quarter of the 20th century; then again the house was let, at various times as either a club or offices. During the Blitz of World War II it was stripped of its few remaining

authentic treasures, specially made furniture, and fireplaces. After the War it was taken over by several owners. In 1986, RIT Capital Partners, the family company of Jacob Rothschild, 4th Baron Rothschild, secured a 96-year lease (with an additional 24-year option) and in a highly acclaimed restoration, returned the state rooms and garden to their original appearance. The lease of Spencer House is valued at £35 million in the 2017 RIT Capital Partners Plc annual report.

After the tour we were served with light refreshments and where members had a chance to speak to the guides and meet up with old friends. It was a wonderful visit and good to hear the story of this great House owned by a family which has such a long history in England. Feedback from members says it was a wonderful informative visit to a beautiful classic house.



Celebrating the Civic Service

Pat Clark



Last year we were up against the rain, this year climate protests threatened to throw a spanner in the works with their Westminster protests but, in the end, all was well and the Mayors were able to process from Dean's Yard to the Abbey's West Door without either getting wet or heckled about riding around in ecologically unsound limousines.

The Abbey looked as magnificent as always, and everyone settled down before the choir's Introit floated effortlessly over the choir screen to let us know the service was underway. This year one chorister hopped in on crutches, but his singing was unaffected and the sound was glorious. The sermon was given by the Bishop of Barking, the Rt Revd Peter Hill, and was a powerful reminder that in difficult and uncertain times it is the duty of those with influence and control to be mindful of the needs of the vulnerable and powerless.

The service had marked the 750th anniversary of the Feast of the Dedication of the Abbey and it was a great pleasure for our Chairman to present to the Dean at the following Reception a cheque for a £750 donation to the Westminster Abbey Association, a mark of thanks for the excellent visit to the Abbey that he had hosted earlier in the year.

Our wonderful array of incumbent mayors in full insignia were photographed as a permanent souvenir of their year.





Scenes from the Civic Service

pre-lockdown Parade showed

LONDON LOVES LIFE!

WE GAVE WORLD A DAY TO REMEMBER FOR SO MANY REASONS

It may seem like a lifetime ago, but London's New Year's Day Parade 2020 was a day to remember for so many reasons ... packed streets, community spirit and not a mask in sight.

In the last major event pre-lockdown, more than 500,000 people thronged to the streets of the West End to watch London's New Year's Day Parade which was hailed as the biggest and best in its 34-year history.

The globally renowned street spectacular was screened live by hundreds of TV stations across the World attracting an audience of many tens of millions.

Volunteer judges at each parade commentary position, supplemented by an independent adjudication panel assembled by Founding Patron Roger Bramble, rated all borough entries on a range of criteria entertainment value, effort, relevance to the theme and visual impact.

The top ten boroughs shared a prize pot of £65,000.

At a special reception and prize ceremony just days after the event it was revealed that the **London Borough Competition was won by Brent – winning £10,000 for the Mayor's chosen charity the Sickle Cell Society and Jason Roberts Foundation.**

The stunning entry, entitled 'The Magic of Brent 2020' was created by, Mahogany Carnival Design, which featured dozens of young dancers.

Bob Bone, Co-Founder and Executive Director of Destination Events, which owns and runs the Parade said: "Take a bow Brent – take a bow London! We had some wonderful entries this year – the best to date in my opinion. It was a close-run thing, but Brent were worthy winners. What a day we had – we have been getting plaudits from across the Capital and around the World. London was a glittering star on January 1st – it never fails to shine for the parade – and this year was no exception."

The Parade's theme was 'London Loves Life' which took on even extra poignancy when the pandemic rolled in.

Bob went on to say: "London certainly showed just how much it loves life – and in turn the World has shown just how much it loves London."



More than 8,000 performers, including entries from 16 London boroughs, took 3½ hours to parade along the route.

LNYP
LONDON'S NEW
YEAR'S DAY PARADE



Second place in the London Borough Competition went to Richmond winning £9,000 for Homestart & Otaker Kraus Music Trust.

Richmond's entry was supported by 'The Poppy Factory', which is where Remembrance Poppies are manufactured and distributed.

The Poppy Factory employs a diverse range of people including many with mental and physical disabilities, including wounded veterans.

Together with the Combination Dance Group, Richmond's entry aimed to promote Richmond's lust for life and the many amazing achievements its local Kraus Music Trust population continue to make through adversity.

Third place went to Sutton (last year's winners) winning £8,000 for Oaks Way Seniors Centre & Sutton Vision. Sutton also won the online 'People's Poll' winning a further £2,000!

Fourth place went to Wandsworth winning £7,000 for Putney & Roehampton Boxing Club, Battersea Cats & Dogs Home and the Alzheimer's Society.

Fifth place went to Barnet winning £6,000 for Cherry Lodge Cancer Care & Home Start.

Other borough winners were:

Barking & Dagenham, Merton, Lewisham, Harrow and Croydon which all received £5,000.

Ealing, Hackney, Haringey, City of Westminster, Enfield and Redbridge received honourable mentions.



Follow us online and on social media platforms

   lnydp.com londonchoralfestival.co.uk

LMA Annual Dinner 8 February 2020

Cllr Jean Lammiman



What a great evening our members had enjoying the wonderful company, food and wine and, in particular, the wisdom of our special guest speaker in the beautiful surroundings of the Corinthia Hotel Ballroom.

The Very Reverend Dr John Hall, Dean Emeritus of Westminster Abbey, took us through his own career including Chaplain of Lambeth Council, Vicar of All Saints, Wimbledon (sitting on the Education Committee of LB Merton) moving to Blackburn in 1992 (again on the Lancashire County Council Education Committee). In Westminster he was Chairman of the Standards Committee before retiring to Chichester.

Dr Hall eulogised about the LMA, describing the role of our Mayors and Past Mayors as being at the

heart of our Community, offering recognition and validation, reaching out to different sectors – schools, scouts, faith groups, carers and charities alike – true ambassadors for community cohesion.

He saw faith at the heart of the nation with commemoration events such as the Holocaust Memorial Day at the Abbey affirming faiths across our communities. The members of the LMA stood testament to that.

Our LMA President Cllr Ruth Bush having introduced our speaker, thanked him for his gracious speech and generous words.





Guests at the Annual Dinner

LMA civic visit to Slovenia & Croatia

11–15 March 2020

Rosemary Markham

Wednesday, 11th March: 72 of us gathered at London Heathrow for the 12.30pm BA flight to Zagreb. We are setting out on the annual LMA Civic Visit – this time to Ljubljana in Slovenia for two and a half days and then on to Zagreb for two days – a slightly longer trip than normal all organised by Bob Bone and his team at Destination Events.

Getting through check in, security and passport control was easy and the departure lounge was relatively full, a lot of people are still travelling, it was reassuring. While we were waiting for Esther and Michael to come through security etc., Mike and Tony went off to find some water and hand gel, water in plentiful supply of hand gel there was not a sniff! You see we live in strange times with Corona Virus ever present in the background. We all agree that going is the right thing to do and that we shall get there and back safely. Ha ha ...

Breakfast over – and very pleasant it was – we join everyone at the boarding gate waving to friends and greeting new faces. The party

will be split into four groups – Mace & Robes will be in Coach 1, Chains & Badge in Coach 2. Once more Mike has been asked to be a Group Leader, so we have fun identifying our 'group' members as we wait to board. There is the usual bubble of excitement, new people to meet, two new cities to visit, three mayors to meet; new things to experience and places to see and enjoy. We depart on time and enjoy the sandwiches we bought at the airport as well as a couple of bottles of red wine and some sparkling water. A good flight, the views as we fly over the snow covered Alps are amazing. For the first time I have a window seat!!

We arrive in Zagreb on time, Bob Bone greets us and then we pile



With our wonderful host, the Mayor of Bled ... Sandra, Jimi and Jean

into the coaches having first collected our luggage and our LMA bags containing the printed itinerary, plenty to read on the three hour journey ahead of us which includes the border crossing from Croatia in to Slovenia. We are warned that this could take a while but we are not worried. It is warm and sunny 20 degrees, our coach is very comfortable and the guide, Matea, very informative – not always wanted/needed. We cross the Sava River which flows through Zagreb and are quickly out into the surrounding countryside. As we approach the border we see lines of lorries waiting to be processed, we just assume that this is normal. The border crossing is long and boring, we all reminisce about other borders we have crossed in days gone by. We have to get off the coach and walk through one hut, have our passports stamped, then get back on the coach, drive no more than 30 yards, then repeat the same exercise. We get a stamp leaving Croatia, but are not so lucky entering Slovenia. By 4.30 pm we are through and Matea tells us about the Brown Bears, Lynx and wolves in a nearby nature reserve, they used to roam the local

countryside however we don't see any. All we do see as we take the main road towards Ljubljana away from the border crossing point is lines and lines of lorries waiting to cross into Croatia. We learn it is taking days in some cases to get through.

To help pass the time and for our interest, Matea introduces us to some Slovenian words : Good morning – Dober Utra; Good day – Dober dan; Good evening – Dober vecer Thank you – Huvala; Beer – pivo and Cheers – Nostralia. She points out a lovely castle on the top of a hill, apparently it is now a very smart golf course complex. We learn that we are driving through an area which includes a large number of limestone caves. Each village has its own caves and after the blocks had been extracted I assume that they were used for storage. The Slovenian diet largely comprises pasta, potato, milk, onion and garlic, fish and little meat. We have a 'comfort' break about 45 minutes from our hotel.

We drive over the Dragon Bridge, I hope that we will walk across it tomorrow and on to The Grand Hotel

Union which is located right in the middle of the city. The centre of the city has been pedestrianised, with access for service vehicles only early in the morning or late at night so it is very quiet and peaceful. We are already checked in so we collect our keys and head to our rooms which are large and well appointed. A quick freshen up and change and then down to the Glass Room in the hotel for a reception, a glass of sparkling wine and to meet the Ambassador, H.E. Sophie Honey. Unfortunately she is busy with other things, mainly the coronavirus problems we assume, so we are welcomed by Paul Jancar who is Deputy Ambassador. Into dinner, a splendid buffet this evening – meats, fish, salads and lovely puddings – great company, what a way to start the trip. To bed about 11pm and a reasonable night.



Our Foreign Correspondent, Rosemary Markham, admires Bled Church, with Cllr Jean Lammiman



"I'll never get up there for dinner"



The man with the magic 'Sabre' sword trick — champagne for all!

Day 2 – Thursday 12 March

Breakfast at 8.00am and ready for a full day. Larissa, our Guide, is charming and we set out at 9am for a tour of the city. First to the Preseren Square just 5 minutes from the hotel with its glorious mixture of architectural styles. Thanks to the architect, Joze Plecnik there is much to admire. Born in 1872 he tried to model Ljubljana on ancient Athens, consequently the city is referred to as 'Plečnik's Ljubljana', and is considered to be one of the 20th century's most important total works of art. It is a delightful city to walk around and we are so lucky in that the weather is lovely. The Triple Bridge comprises three spans – one for vehicles and two for pedestrians crosses the river here, but we walk to the right out of the square. We stop and look and walk again, there is so much to enjoy. Because of the coronavirus the churches are all closed, as is the University Library. This impressive building was built on the same site as one of the palaces that was badly damaged by the earthquake on Easter Sunday April 1895. The building was demolished and Plecnik incorporated stones from that building into the exterior walls as a decorative feature, all the windows of the Library are designed to look like open books – it is very impressive and a joy to see. We walked down to the river and cross over using the Cobblers' or Baker's Bridge. A pedestrian bridge connecting two major areas of medieval Ljubljana. The bridge designed by Plecnik, is very elegant with 12 iconic columns and named so because this is the spot where in the Middle Ages the vendors would erect stalls to sell their wares and where dishonest bakers who cheated on the weight of bread sold were dunked into

the river. Moving on we walk along the side of the river to St Nicholas Cathedral, once again tightly closed except for local residents. From there just around the corner we come across the flower market, so bright and colourful, the smell was wonderful. This street leads into the market square with the Butcher's Bridge crossing the river at one end of the market square and the Dragon Bridge at the other end.

There were a very few stalls set up selling fruit and vegetables – but those that were had the most wonderful looking fruits, enormous grapes, enormous bunches of radishes, pomegranates bigger than I have ever seen, the strawberries large, red and shiny – everything looked so tempting and delicious – could I smuggle some home I wonder? I buy four Easter Egg candles for William, Thomas, Hayden and Millie. Such fun. After a 10 minute 'shopping' break near to the market square. Moving on we make our way to a square from where people can take the funicular railway up to the castle, sadly due to the coronavirus it is closed so we are taken up to the castle by coach. It is quite a climb, we are dropped off at the beginning of the pathway leading up to this beautifully renovated building. There is evidence of where in medieval times people, horses and carts entered which is way above the level that we are standing on. Our guide explains that there was another tower, a drawbridge and a moat then. People were clearly much shorter and thinner that we are today which is why the entrance is low and narrow. We walk up to the main entrance and pass through admiring a very old vine on our right hand side, it still produces a sufficient harvest to make a few bottles of very exclusive wine each year. We marvel at the expanse of the inner courtyard and then climb up to the viewing point on the castle wall from where we can



Row, row, row the boat ... across Lake Bled to the mountain – great fun



Cllr John Crowder and Steve Summers in Lockdown!

enjoy a great view over the whole area and across to the snow covered mountains which surround this delightful city. We are having lunch here. I casually remark that there must be a wedding today because set up for lunch or dinner in the courtyard are three tables and there is a lovely floral heart hanging off to the side of the pathway leading to the chapel which of course is closed. Thank heavens it was reasonably warm, quite windy but the sun shone and some of us actually got sunburned as we sat in the open air to eat a splendid lunch. It turned out that the City Fathers had said it was not appropriate for the small restaurant to host us inside because of the lack of space and the danger of transmitting the virus amongst ourselves and their staff. Lunch over, we returned to the coaches to travel to Lake Bled with all its beauty and charm. We are dropped at Villa Bled now a luxury hotel on the shores of the lake with a very chequered history. The villa was once the summer residence of Marshall Tito where he hosted many official state visits including Nikita Khrushchev, King Hussein of Jordan, Indira Gandhi Kim Il Sung and many others. If only the walls could speak. We are ushered into a beautiful ballroom with a magnificent mural depicting the struggles of this country that has gone through so much turmoil past years. The Mayor of Bled, Janez Fajfar, welcomes us and speaks about the Villa's history and his involvement over many years. He recalls the day in 1991 at the beginning of the Yugoslav wars, when fully armed soldiers arrived at the front doors to take Tito away. Then latterly he had the honour of welcoming Prince Charles, Prince Edward and, said with a broad smile, Monica Lewinski. Her room he added was easily let!!!! After his excellent talk and a welcome glass of wine we are directed to the steps that lead down to the edge of the lake and the traditional flat bottomed wooden pilgrim boats

known as 'pletna'. These boats which take us over to Bled island, are propelled by the 'stehrudder' technique where the oarsman is standing and rowing with two oars. Arriving at the landing stage on the island we climb the 99 steps up to the church – as somebody said, "don't look up just take it 10 at a time"!! It was challenging I have to confess. Fortunately, the sun is shining and the air is clear and fresh, it is worth the climb and there are seats at the top for those who need to take a breather. Before we move into the Chapel of St Maria, our new best friend Janez explains that some Saturdays there are three weddings and the bride has to be carried up those 99 steps – I cannot recall if it was the future husband or as he seemed to infer, the officiating official!, not that it matters, it would be quite a challenge for whoever was responsible. Janez explains how there has been a place of worship on the island since medieval times and how, following earthquakes the building has been rebuilt and renovated on many occasions. He points out the remains of the carefully preserved colourful Gothic frescos in the presbytery, the richly decorated main altar dating back to 1747. We are invited to ring the 'wishing bell' located in the upper roof above the church nave – several try and succeed, it needs a particular technique to get it ringing which makes the wish even more special. Outside we admire the 54 metre high 15th century bell tower housing three bells we are told, damaged by two earthquakes and a lightning strike in 1688 it has been renovated several times. The gift shop beckons and many of us buy keepsakes to take home. We finish our visit to this magical island by walking back down the 99 steps or, as some did, taking the sloping path back to the landing stage where the boats are waiting to take us across to the Bled Rowing Centre on the other side of the lake where our coaches wait to

take us to Bled Castle. The sun is just beginning to settle behind the mountains and I hope that we shall reach the battlements of the castle before it goes down completely – it should be a lovely sunset. Bled Castle is more than 1000 years old and built on a 130 metre precipice above the city of Bled and overlooking the lake. It's a long and steep climb but taken slowly we all make it eventually. The facilities (loos) are close to the top of the pathway just inside the main entrance gate to the Castle itself – significant for later in the evening. The Mayor, Janez Fajfar, joins us again in his splendid robe and magnificent hat. The waiters open bottles of delicious sparkling wine with 'sabrage' – the traditional flamboyant sweep of a cavalry sword – we watch the corks as they shoot into the air and then tumble down the cliff face, there must be a considerable pile at the bottom! Again Jamez explains the history of the castle and is sad that we cannot explore it as he would have liked, however as he says with a slight shrug, these are not normal times and the powers that be have closed all public places – of course we know this from

our walk in the morning with all the churches and the magnificent library closed in Ljubljana. Drinks over we move into the restaurant just off the main courtyard for a wonderful dinner. Each place setting has a locally made lace doily, a menu and a postcard already stamped and overprinted with the LMA logo. Such a delightful touch and so thoughtful of this lovely, lovely man. I immediately fill mine in to send to an elderly friend who 'only travels via our postcards these days'. I shall ask if the concierge at the hotel will post it for me. A passing thought – catering for so many of us and in this location, how do they get all the provisions up that steep path – I wonder if they still use donkeys!? Dinner over, gifts exchanged and grateful thanks expressed, we walk back down the path to our coaches waiting in the car park below. The Mayor begs a lift home in our coach and once again he entertains us with more information and stories about Bled, Bled Castle, Villa Bled and local history. We drop him off near the central Petrol Station and watch as he walks away towards his home. I do hope that he has enjoyed our visit as

much as we have and that he will remember us in the months to come. He was a charming host and we were made to feel very special. Just before we leave the restaurant, Bob tells us that the programme for Friday has been changed because both the Mayor of Ljubljana and of Zagreb have cancelled their meetings with us because of the escalating situation across both countries with the coronavirus. So we shall now be leaving the hotel at 10.30am sharp to drive to the border checkpoint for processing and then once through, he warns us that we should be aware that this could take a while, we shall have lunch as arranged at the Gostionica Kod Spilje restaurant at Samobor and then visit the Grgos Cave complex which is nearby. This change to the programme is welcomed and we turn in, some head to the bar, but all happy in the knowledge that all is still well.



LMA Chairman Clare Whelan and fellow travellers listen intently to our excellent guide in a sunny Ljubljana square



FCO NOTICE re Croatian Government immediate 'Quarantine Arrangements'

Day 3 – Friday 13 March

Perhaps we should have guessed from the date, that this was going to be a different sort of day.

It's chilly, but still dry and the sun is trying to come through. We take advantage of a more leisurely start to the day. The hotel provides an excellent breakfast and it is lovely to linger over that extra cup of coffee. Mike and I decide to take a stroll and find a touristy shop to buy some tiny gifts to bring home. It is very quiet. Back at the hotel by 10 am we are accosted by Clare Whelan coming up to us and saying "sorry, but I need to borrow Mike for five minutes" – I naturally agree and watch Clare, Steve Summers and Mike disappear down the corridor. I wait with Pat and John Clark in reception, we are well aware that there is something afoot. 10 minutes later Mike returns and we return to our room to collect our luggage. As a Group Leader he has been appraised of the currently situation. Basically, the borders are about to close and if we were to get through, and there is no guarantee that we would have as soon as we reached the Croatian side we would be put into 14 days of isolation/quarantine with no choice but to comply. The decision has been taken – or rather was taken at 7.30 that morning with the agreement of the Ambassador, to charter a plane to get us home. Various discussions had already taken place to explore all of our options to get home but with commercial flights either fully booked or cancelled this was our only hope of getting home before the lockdown. The seriousness of the situation is made clear by Bob as we gather with our luggage in one of the hotels largest rooms. The hotel will be closing its doors as we depart, but they have agreed to provide us with lunch before we board our coaches at 2.00pm to go to Ljubljana Airport

for our flight at 4pm back to Southend International Airport. There is an hour before lunch so some of us go for a walk, visiting the MAXI department store in the main square. It is a joy to browse the lovely clothes, but we wonder about the future of the store and indeed the future of the shop workers who are milling around folding and refolding clothes and tidying shelves. Others take the opportunity to visit the market again, but find it is much less busy than the day before. Another group headed to a café along the river bank for coffee and pear schnapps. It is a warm and sunny day, who would know that the world is in crisis and that we are entering a time of total insecurity and hardship for many thousands of people. We are all very fortunate.

The Ambassador joins us for lunch and we all express our sadness that we have to leave in this way and our appreciation of the help that the Embassy has provided. We have a lovely 'last' meal, admiring the way that the hotel has put a three course meal together at such sort notice. As we wait to board the coaches, standing on the pavement outside the hotel. I get an eerie feeling of just how refugees must feel. We are 'luxury' refugees, but none the less we are fleeing a country and hoping to reach the safety of the our home country before everything is shut down. We feel for our coach driver, Jacob, who knows how long it will take for him to get across and back into Croatia. He is Croatian and the coach company is based in Zagreb so as soon as he reaches Zagreb he will go home and have to isolate himself for 14 days. On the way to the airport we pass through a town shutting down, shops closed and boarded up, offices closed and very few people on the streets. We wait at the airport, our plane has not yet arrived. There is a palpable wave of relief as we watch it land, then we wait to be told to board, we do

and as we are sitting patiently waiting to take off the intercom crackles and it's Captain Andrew Marshall of Jota Airways, to the rescue. He welcomes us aboard, tells us who the crew are, that all the sandwiches, crisps, drinks are free and that we are to sit back and enjoy the flight.....when that is he has the last bit of paper that will allow us to leave Slovenia and fly back to the UK. It is an anxious wait but at last the engines rev up and we trundle down the runway and up, up and away into a clear blue sky heading home. It's a 2 hour 30 minute flight and we land at Southend International early evening. There are coaches laid on to take us either to Victoria Coach Station or Kings Cross. We bid farewell and 'talk soon' to those opting for Victoria and settle down for the long drive into the centre of London. Arriving at Kings Cross, we thank our driver who reveals that he is actually going back to Hayes which is only half an hour from where we live, he offers to drop us off at the Asda Store. After a bit of discussion we decide on an Uber taxi

from Kings Cross rather than chancing our luck in Hayes, since it would be 9.30 or later before we got there. We were much relieved to walk through our front door. Our daughter Valerie had put milk in the fridge and bread on the table bless her. We opened a bottle of wine, raided the cheese and biscuits and watched the news – thank heavens we were safely home, clearly the UK and the world for that matter are going into meltdown. This virus is spreading rapidly and we realise that within days we will be told to stay at home, it is impossible to think about the future, we must take it day by day. How lucky we are to be back in the UK.

We all agreed that Thursday and our visits to Ljubljana city, the Castle, Lake Bled, Bled Castle and the meals we have enjoyed have been truly wonderful. Thank you Bob Bone for all the care and attention in setting up this trip to Croatia and Slovenia, it is a great shame that we never got back to Zagreb, that will have to be for another

time perhaps. Bob's quick action in providing a solution to us getting home is so much appreciated, the unexpected additional cost incurred by chartering the plane is something that I am sure we will all perhaps have to take some responsibility for, but I suspect that that will be a discussion for when we are once again free to roam this wonderful land we all have the privilege to live in.



The LMA Whittington Walk

Graham Holland



As with all the London Mayors during 1990-91, I received my notification from Helen Watson, the Secretary of the London Mayors' Association, stating that I was invited to a charity walk in April 1991. The idea, I was told, was that I could raise money for my charity by walking five miles from the Whittington Stone in Highgate Hill to the Mansion House.

The Walk started in 1980. When I went on the Walk as Mayor, Frank Rees from Harrow was the Chief Steward. The participating Mayors used to meet in a pub in Highgate Hill. Somehow Frank had managed to persuade mine host to open early for changing purposes, and the occasional snifter, depending on the weather. Frank would wait until the Mayors had arrived and, standing on the bar, gave out the instructions for the day's activity. Certificates were prepared for those present with a thick marker pen.

The first event, once Mayors were ready to leave the hostelry, was the Whittington Stone. Built in 1821, it is meant to give 'good fortune' to those who stroke the cat, hence the delay in starting the Walk until the group picture was taken, and the last Mayor has finished stroking the cat. At that stage, the Mayors took off their robes and just walked with chains. This policy changed in 1998 when, because of the

occasional inclement weather, and to enjoy the spectacle of Mayors in their robes and chains walking through Islington and the City, it became the norm.

The Walk proceeded down the Holloway Road for approximately two miles. In Frank's day, and for a few years afterwards, the Mayors would stop at the Hen & Chicken public house near to Highbury Corner in St Paul's Road.

Unfortunately, the walkers, the organisers and the police arrived as the locals were already enjoying their tipples. Finding room for another fifty people, thirty or so in their chains (I was asked if they were going to appear in a play upstairs on one occasion), was not the easiest of tasks. Some Mayors wanted another snifter, some just wanted to sit down and attendants were getting concerned about the Mayoral chains, whilst general chaos ensued.

Whilst the Hen & Chicken was a



pleasant enough pub, it was not the best place for the halfway break. So following advice and visits to other hostelries, the Belinda Castle in Canonbury Road was chosen, mainly as it had a beer garden outside where walkers could congregate. By now our fame had spread to the offices of the local MP, and following a request from his office, Jeremy Corbyn joined the Walk on a couple of occasions.

But the Belinda Castle was still a public house, with all the attendant difficulties of Mayors infiltrating an already busy hostelry. So, once again, I went on a mission to find another suitable resting place for the walkers to rest. With Islington's help, the Vineyard in Upper Street became the venue for halfway refreshments. Unfortunately, due to the problems of an event on the evening beforehand one year, I was asked to find another venue. Islington Council's Mayoral office, to whom I would like to record my thanks for all their help over a number of years with the Walk, suggested use of the Town Hall in Upper Street. This Grade II listed building, with an impressive Council Chamber as Mayors and Councillors will fondly remember them, was built in 1925 with the original staircase, clocks, paintings and decorative panels surviving for almost 100 years. It is still the ideal choice today.

The next change came when Deborah Goodheart, the public relations officer at the Whittington Hospital, offered the facility of the Turning point Restaurant for refreshments and changing facilities. I was delighted as I was never very good at shouting instructions whilst climbing onto public bars.

In addition to changes of choices of halfway houses, and the starting venue, the route also changed. In trying to follow a route which may have been taken by Dick Whittington back to London in the 14th century, walkers used to walk down Essex Road after the halfway stop. Apart from the Alfred Hitchcock museum, the route was not a memorable one. So, two years ago, it was amended



so that walkers continued up Upper Street, passing through Camden Passage to City Road. In order to help bemused tourists who wondered who were these red-robed people with chains and a police escort, the LMA has produced a leaflet to hand out to them.

The walk down City road is equally interesting. It was built in 1761 as a continuation of the route to the City of London. In addition to the green Smith's clock at the junction with Upper Street, the Walk passes Moorfields Eye Hospital, the former workhouse (now a hotel), Wesley's Chapel and the Hon Artillery Company. At its junction with the Old Street roundabout is the Eagle public house, which was immortalised in the Anthony Newley song 'Up and down the City Road, In and out of the Eagle.'

The route continues down the City Road to Moorgate, where the walkers are met by the City police, and City Road becomes Moorgate, thus preserving the lack of any roads in the City.

And the piece de resistance is the lunch provided by the Lord Mayor in the Egyptian Room at the Mansion House. This has been a custom since 2006 when the Lord Mayor felt it was more appropriate that the Mayoral walkers deserved a sit down meal after their sterling efforts in raising money for their Mayoral charities.

Only once has the Walk have not followed the traditional Dick Whittington Walk. This was in 1999 when it decided to walk from the Tower of London, via the East India Club, to Westminster City Hall, where the Lord Mayor hosted lunch.

The Walk has evolved in the years whilst I have been Chief Steward. The LMA hopes that the changes have kept the event interesting and enjoyable. The one thing which has remained the same is that the event is intended as an enjoyable day out for all the Mayors, Speakers and Chairs in London to enjoy their company, and to use the Walk as an opportunity to raise money for their Mayoral charities.

I would like to thank everybody who has helped and advised me during my tenure as Chief Steward. Space does not permit me to name everybody, but I would like to pay especial thanks to the Lord Mayor of London's Office for their continued support of the event, to the Mayor's Office in Islington for their help and advice and the Whittington Hospital.

I was asked to take over the role of Chief Steward in 1993. Twenty-seven years later, I am still the Chief Steward. There is no early remission for good behaviour.

I hope future Mayors will enjoy it as much as I have over those twenty-seven years.

2019-20 LMA Officers & Executive Committee

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Vice-Chairmen:	Mr Ronnie Barden Cllr Oonagh Moulton
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